

LABACE 2012

Event emerges as face and voice of Latin American business aviation

by Kirby J. Harrison & Richard Pedicini

Organizers of the Latin American Business Aviation Conference & Exhibition (LABACE) say the event has become the premier showcase of business aviation not just in Brazil but in all of Latin America, and ABAG chairman Eduardo Marson offers up LABACE 2012 as proof.

The first LABACE event in 2003 drew barely 3,000 visitors and appeared destined for failure. But in 2007 ABAG (Associação Brasileira de Aviação Geral) took full control of the show and relaunched it in its current venue at São Paulo's

Congonhas Airport, and the event has grown remarkably. According to Marson, on the second day of LABACE 2012, total attendance was just 900 shy of the 2011 record 15,429 and he added, "We're confident we'll hit 16,000." The final official attendance tally this year was 16,722.

Perhaps more telling than the attendance numbers was evidence that LABACE and organizer ABAG are beginning to make the voice of business aviation heard in the halls of the Brazilian government. With the FIFA World Cup scheduled

for Brazil in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016 and Brazil still woefully unprepared in terms of aviation infrastructure, that voice is growing in stature.

At the opening general session on August 15, Minister of Civil Aviation Wagner Bitencourt offered some reassurance, saying that a decree to permit the private construction and commercial operation of sorely needed business aviation airports is "in the final stages of consideration."

Indeed, a number of entrepreneurial souls are taking the government's promises seriously, among them Francisco Lyra, former president of ABAG. Lyra is proposing a new airport near São Paulo, and a detailed model was on display at LABACE.

The proposed site of Catarina Aeroporto Executivo, adjacent to a major highway, would have two parallel runways, the longer one stretching 8,100 feet. A representative of Lyra's company told AIN that half the visitors to the exhibit have been non-Brazilians interested in FBO and maintenance services and options for hangar space.

A second airport proposal has offered few details, but a military source assured AIN that a large parcel owned by the Brazilian army has been studied in the past as an airport site.

Airspace in Brazil, as well as the country's ATC system, is run by the military, and more positive news came from Lieutenant Colonel Antonio de Marchi, who stated emphatically, "If they build the airports, we can handle the traffic."

LABACE 2012 was remarkable in that a record 70 aircraft were on static display, among them an Airbus ACJ318 and, for the first time at LABACE, Embraer's Lineage 1000 bizliner derivative of the E190 airliner.

José Montiel of Standard-Aero pointed out that growing numbers of U.S. exhibitors at LABACE have obtained Brazilian civil aviation (ANAC) certification to ease serving Brazilian aircraft and crews. He pointed out that "The process is easier now, and ANAC has posted all the requirements and

400XT Journeys South to Pastures New

Nextant Aerospace brought its Nextant 400XT, "the world's only FAA-certified remanufactured business jet," to LABACE, where it made its Latin American debut.

The 400XT is a much-enhanced derivative of the original Beechjet 400A and 400XP airframe. It has a range of 2,005 nm with two pilots, four passengers and IFR reserves.

This improved range allows nonstop flights from São Paulo to such destinations as Buenos Aires, Argentina; Lima, Peru; and Santiago, Chile. Flights originating in more northerly locales, such as Bogotá, Colombia, and Caracas, Venezuela, can also reach North American destinations nonstop.

"We are proud to introduce the Nextant 400XT to Latin America, a market with tremendous potential," said Kenn Ricci, CEO of the Cleveland, Ohio-based company.

—K.J.H.



Nextant 400XT, LABACE first-timer this year.

information for certification on its website."

Coming to LABACE was absolutely worthwhile, said Michel Popelier, sales director for StandardAero. "Brazil is a bright spot and is about 12 to 13 percent of our international business.

We've been coming to LABACE for three years and we find that our partner, Goiânia FBO Brasil, helps in bridging language and cultural differences."

Manufacturers Log Sales

Well before the show closed on August 17 there were reports of aircraft sales.

According to Marson, Brazil's Helibras sold five helicopters at LABACE, two of them to people who simply walked in for the first time at the show. And he added that negotiations were going on for a sixth helicopter.

Also at LABACE, Helibras delivered two Eurocopters from previous sales, an EC120 to an unidentified company in Maranhão and an AS350 to a business group in São Paulo.

A spokesman at Tam Aviação

Executiva told AIN on the closing day of the show, "We've sold two airplanes [one of them a Citation Mustang], another sale is being negotiated, and I've put the champagne on ice."

Cessna Aircraft was represented at LABACE by Tam's executive aviation division, as it has been in past years.

Noting that the Tam association with Cessna stretches back 30 years, sales director Leonardo Fiuza pointed out that the relationship is mutually advantageous. And while Cessna Aircraft did not bring a large contingent from its Wichita headquarters, the OEM was well represented by its authorized sales representative in Brazil.

In fact, at LABACE 2012, the aircraft static display in front of the Tam chalet featured seven aircraft representing Cessna's in-production fleet—a Citation Mustang, Citation CJ4, Citation Sovereign and Citation XLS+, as well as a Grand Caravan, a 206 Stationair and a Corvalis.

With LABACE pointing the way, the Latin American market

could be pivotal, said market analyst Brian Foley of New Jersey-based Brian Foley Assoc. "With European general aviation markets essentially stagnant and the Asian markets evidently running out of steam, hopeful eyes turn toward Latin America," he said recently.

Limits on Brazil's Growth

According to Global Information studies, Brazil has more high-net-worth individuals than any other country in Latin America and boasts more than 155,000 millionaires—confirming numbers published in the new "Brazilian General Aviation Yearbook 2012" by ABAG.

The book noted, among other figures, that the country now has the world's second largest general aviation fleet and is the second largest market for new business jets—623 aircraft—behind only the U.S.

If there is a factor limiting the growth of business aviation in Brazil, it may be the government's recent action and subsequent confusion regarding such issues as import tax, registration, temporary admission in Brazil, and the concept of a "transitional passenger."

Nevertheless, wrote Foley in a recent analysis, the Latin American market has been under-appreciated. "It currently accounts for 10 percent of all the world's business jets and

ACJ318 Proves a Big Presence at LABACE

The biggest thing at LABACE, quite literally, was the ACJ318 from Airbus, inside and outside.

"When it comes to business jets, it's what you offer in the cabin that counts," said Airbus COO for customers John Leahy.

The big twin-engine jet was on loan from charter operator Globaljet of Switzerland, and the 19-passenger cabin features a private office that converts to a stateroom and executive club seating in several lounge areas.

In addition to the cabin size and amenities, Latin American customers are likely to find the \$69 million price (including the cabin outfitting) and the airplane's range (4,200 nm nonstop at Mach 0.78) attractive considerations. The intercontinental range allows nonstop flights between such city pairs as Jeddah/London and Paris/New York and São Paulo/Miami.

—K.J.H.



The ACJ318 from charter operator Globaljet on display at LABACE 2012 is celebrated by the Batucada children's band.

operates on a somewhat different economic cycle. If it were not for the steady activity the region has provided, especially during this recent downturn, our manufacturers would be in even more dire straits today."

Marson expressed considerable satisfaction with LABACE 2012, even suggesting that as the space available at Congonhas

Airport shrinks, by 2014 ABAG may be able to choose between two new business aviation airports as a new venue.

At this point, however, LABACE 2013 remains scheduled for the same location at Congonhas Airport, where it has been for the past four shows. An exact date has yet to be determined. □

São Paulo Heliports Expanding

If it flies, it has to have someplace to land, and the São Paulo rotary-wing fleet, much of which was represented at LABACE, reflects the current need to expand existing heliports and create ones with more services, as well as steps to minimize the impact of helicopters on the city and environment.

São Paulo-based Helicidade, with its main center in the Jaguaré neighborhood, is in its 10th year of growth and its fourth



year as a LABACE exhibitor. The center's 12 spots and 48,400 sq ft of hangar provide capacity for 80 helicopters, and the facility also has a maintenance shop, executive lounge, meeting rooms, health club and other conveniences.

Commercial manager Edson Pedroso e Silva Junior says that growth is about 10 percent per year and "we are already thinking of expanding to nearby cities. We're now just waiting for approvals."

Also at LABACE was a large model of the HBR-Heliportos do Brasil, a project slated to be operational in May next year. Near the SBT Television studios, three miles from the city's inner ring

highway, the new center's 86,100 sq ft of hangar space will accommodate 144 helicopters and the 53,000 sq ft of maintenance shop space will allow the facility to handle 45 helicopters at once. The company has already obtained ANAC certification to perform maintenance for all major manufacturers and the facility will have its own control tower.

Asked about noise interference with the nearby television studios, a salesman replied, "SBT? It's got good acoustic insulation, and besides, it's got a helipad, too."

—K.J.H.

LABACE CLIPS

► Power Helicopters Wins Sales

Power Helicopters brought an EC130B4 to LABACE 2012 and walked away with a \$3.85 million sale. The light single was purchased by entrepreneur Douglas Aguiar, president of Brazilian construction equipment supplier Brastub.

Icing on Power's sales cake came with the separate acquisition of a four-passenger Robinson R66 by an unidentified businessman from the eastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais.

► Edra Picks 300CBi Helos for Training

Brazilian aviation pilot training service Edra Aeronáutica announced at LABACE that it expects to take delivery of two Schweizer 300CBi helicopters before year-end, adding them to the six Schweizers it already uses for pilot training. Edra also represents Schweizer in Brazil.

► Bombardier Hosts Safety Standdown

Bombardier Aerospace launched LABACE 2012 two days early with its annual safety standdown, a two-day event this year and held August 13 and 14. In its third year in Latin America, the standdown attracted strong attendance, with approximately 70 attendees this year in a near-standing room-only facility at the Grand Hyatt São Paulo Hotel.

► Brazil Yearbook Profiles Business Aviation

The second annual Brazilian General Aviation Yearbook was released on August 15 at LABACE, and it now includes comparisons with the prior year, showing the evolution of the country's various fleets. The book notes that the jet fleet increased from 540 in 2010 to 623 in 2011, turboprop aircraft from 863 to 953 and helicopters from 1,495 to 1,654. It also points out that of the jet fleet 285 aircraft are 10 years old or older, and that 267 of the 953 turboprops are more than 30 years old.

► Maintenance Service Growing in Brazil

Business aviation maintenance capacity increased and relocated in Brazil this year, moving to airports on the outskirts of business and aviation capital São Paulo for additional capacity. Embraer broke ground on a new business jet service center in Sorocaba, 60 miles west of São Paulo. Completion is expected in next year's second half. Gulfstream Brazil opened recently in Sorocaba, with a 24,000-sq-ft hangar, as well as ANAC and FAA certified technicians and a bonded parts warehouse. Bombardier moved from Sorocaba to São José dos Campos about a year ago to upgrade its service facility and opened a regional support office and parts warehouse at Congonhas. Brazilian business aviation firm Global Aviation is building bases in Sorocaba and in Salvador in the northeast. Finally, Tam Aviação Executiva announced a new maintenance center at Aracati in the far northeast.

► Avanti IIs Find Home in Brazil

Algar Aviation, Piaggio Aero's exclusive representative in Brazil, made a splash at LABACE with the display of the Italian manufacturer's Avanti II twin-engine turboprop pusher. Algar sees Brazil as a ready market for the sleek, speedy airplane, and indeed two of them have been sold and are already in service in Brazil. With a top speed of 402 knots, the turboprop airplane is as fast as most light jets, burns one-third less fuel and has a cabin size typical of many a medium jet. Earlier this year, Algar became an Embraer-authorized service center. In less than a year of partnership with the Brazilian manufacturer, Algar Aviation has already serviced 25 percent of the Phenom 100 fleet and 12 percent of the Phenom 300 fleet, representing approximately 20 aircraft.